

### **This I believe: Beautiful Imperfections**

I strongly believe that dissonance is what makes life beautiful. Constant perfection would make the world boring. It is our pursuance for perfection and yearning for happiness that adds colour to our lives. We all encounter problems, simple, mind-boggling, overwhelming, emotional or traumatic. However, as Huey Newton said, 'if you stop struggling, then you stop life'. Imperfection makes life exciting; the joy of conquering your weaknesses.

As a child, many things were unfair; the classmate who aced her examinations, my friend's wonderful control over language and another's apparent ease at handling difficult sums.

In secondary one, I made the life-changing decision of joining the Higher Music Programme (HMP). I was overwhelmed by the sudden presence of musical talents all around me. It was intimidating, impressive and inspiring. It was rather disheartening to see so many with much better qualifications, the ability to hear every single detail in the extract and ace every single music test. 'Why doesn't my music speak as well as that? Why isn't my perfect pitch spot-on? Why can't I memorize the music fast enough?' For the first few months, I did not voice out my opinions in during lessons, valid or invalid; I was unsure of sharing what I heard. 'What if it contradicted what the others say? How could I be better than my legendary classmate?' Their music was perfect; every note sounded different, with varying dynamics. It was an immaculate rendition of the piece. Instead of facing them, I resented my flaws.

Once, I've watched my friend play at a master class. The professor mentioned certain points of improvement which did not coincide with what our music teacher or my piano teacher said. He made absolute sense, but his opinions differed from the two teachers I respected. That made me realise that perfection, especially for music, differs from person to person and is, most indefinitely, subjective.

However, as I got to know them better, I realized that my friends were not born talented. They had years of intense training since a young age and had their share of hard work, sweat and tears; having spent most of their childhood with only the piano for company. Hearing all those remarkable stories spurred me to work harder; to question what I previously thought was perfection and to make up for what I did not possess.

It was the hard work and the practices that changed my perception of things.

During the last two years, I felt joy that I have never experienced before; the triumph of mastering a piece, the pride of rapid improvement and the satisfaction of conquering a weakness. There is no such thing as perfect. Humans are flawed creatures. As the world-renown pianist, Vladimir Horowitz, had cleverly put, 'Perfection itself is imperfection'. The wisest choice, I believe, would be to accept your weaknesses, identify your strengths and work towards perfection. Although the word itself remains subjective and elusive, I know it is the journey to perfection itself that is what we live for.